

Amendment to the Drawings

Kindly amend the drawings by substituting the versions appearing behind Tab A for those originally filed. Applicant has revised these figures consistent with the Examiner's requests.

Response

A. Introduction

Claims 1-4, 7-12, and 21-23 remain pending in the application following entry of the foregoing amendments. The Examiner initially rejected previously-pending claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,739,281 to Grimes and under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,546,885 to Porada. He additionally initially rejected independent claim 12 under section 102(b) as anticipated by U.K. Patent Document No. 2277492 (“the U.K. Patent”) and under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,154,134 to Goldsmith. The Examiner also rejected other pending claims for various reasons and objected to the drawings of the application.

B. Objections to the Drawings

Attached hereto behind Tab A are revised drawings for the application. These revised drawings omit textual information deemed objectionable by the Examiner and, Applicant believes, resolve the Examiner’s other concerns. Applicant accordingly requests that the revisions to the drawings be accepted and the Examiner’s objections be withdrawn.

C. Claim Rejections

1. Independent Claim 1

Applicant has incorporated into independent claim 1 the subject matter of previously-pending claims 5 and 6, which the Examiner initially rejected as anticipated by the Grimes and Porada patents. Attached hereto behind Tab B is the Declaration of Timothy Fleming, submitted pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.131,

establishing invention of the relevant claimed subject matter of the above-identified application prior to the filing date of the Grimes patent and due diligence from that date to the filing of the above-identified application. Applicant accordingly requests that all rejections based on the Grimes patent be withdrawn.

Furthermore, Applicant believes the Examiner's rejection of prior claim 6 based on the Porada patent is incorrect. According to the Examiner, rail 19 of the Porada patent is the "quick-release fastener" referenced in prior claim 6. Even assuming--for purposes of argument--that the Examiner's contention is correct, *in no way is rail 19* of the Porada patent *part of tubes 40-43* (each of which the Examiner considers to be an "accessory") *or received by hole 15* (which the Examiner considers to be a "receptacle"). *Consequently, unlike prior claim 6, the Porada patent wholly fails to disclose or suggest any quick-release fastener forming part of an accessory and received by a receptacle of the deck.* At least because Applicant has incorporated this subject matter into independent claim 1, he requests that claims 1-4, 7-11, and 21-23 be allowed.

2. Dependent Claims

Additional bases support allowance of multiple claims depending from claim 1. Claim 7, for example, recites that "the receptacle is included in a plate incorporated into the deck." By contrast, hole 15 of the Porada patent is formed directly in the deck itself, rather than in any plate incorporated therein.

As another example, claim 23 recites (via claim 22) not only that a D-ring projects above deck, but also that a boat includes (1) a plate to which the D-ring is attached, (2) a bottom plate positioned underneath the deck, and (3) a fastener

connecting the plate and the bottom plate. According to the Examiner, U.S. Patent No. 4,251,893 to McCrory discloses D-ring 88, deck 26, plate 98a, and bottom plate 98b bonded to plate 98a. See Office Action at pp. 4-5. Contrary to claim 23, however, *D-ring 88 is not attached to plate 98a and bottom plate 98b is not underneath deck 26*. Thus, even if the material bonding plate 98a and bottom plate 98b qualifies as a “fastener,” the McCrory patent wholly fails to disclose or suggest multiple aspects of claim 23.

3. Independent Claim 12

Independent claim 12, finally, recites the action of “disconnecting at least one accessory from a deck spanning substantially the length of [an inflatable] boat.” The Examiner notes that the U.K. Patent discloses dismantling part of steering console 7 from the removable subsection shown in Figure 5 of that document. Clear, however, is that the subsection does *not* span substantially the length of boat 1, instead spanning solely a small portion thereof. Applicant thus believes the U.K. Patent neither teaches nor contemplates the recited action of claim 12 and requests that the rejection be withdrawn.

The Examiner also contends that claim 12 would somehow be obvious over the disclosure of the Goldsmith patent, even though that patent discloses *none* of the actions recited in the claim. See Office Action at p. 5 (acknowledging failure of the Goldsmith patent to teach actions a., b., and c.). In particular, no reason exists *baldly to assume*--as the Examiner has done--that bottom wall 16 would be removable, as such removability is not standard. Applicant hence considers this

rejection of the Examiner to lack even *prima facie* basis and requests that it be withdrawn and that claim 12 be allowed.

Conclusion

Applicant requests that the Examiner allow claims 1-4, 7-12, and 21-23 and that a patent containing these claims issue in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean W. Russell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" being more prominent.

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